AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-7. **(Canceled)**

8. **(Previously Presented)** A distribution system that distributes a program for decoding encoded audio data, comprising:

a distribution server device which sends the program and permission information which indicates that the program is permitted for use, in correspondence with the program;

a removable memory unit which has an area for storing one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type;

an acquisition device which, being connected to said distribution server device via a network and loaded with said removable memory unit, acquires the permission information and the program from said distribution server device and stores the permission information and the program in said removable memory unit, the permission information being stored in correspondence with the program; and

an audio reproduction device which, being loaded with said removable memory unit storing the program, decodes the encoded audio data using the program, and outputs sounds, and said audio reproduction device stores a detection module beforehand, said detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data,

wherein the distribution system further generates a user identifier which identifies a user of said audio reproduction device, stores the generated user identifier, sends the generated user identifier, and also distributes maintenance information for updating the program,

said acquisition device acquires the user identifier and stores the user identifier in said removable memory unit, reads the user identifier from said removable memory unit, and sends the user identifier to said distribution server device,

said distribution server device (a) stores the maintenance information beforehand in correspondence with the program, (b) receives the user identifier, (c) judges whether the received user identifier matches the user identifier stored in said distribution server device, and (d) sends the maintenance information if the two user identifiers are judged as matching, and

said acquisition device acquires the maintenance information, and updates the program stored in said removable memory unit using the acquired maintenance information, and

3

said audio reproduction device detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from said removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, and said audio reproduction device decodes the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in said removable memory unit.

9. **(Previously Presented)**   The distribution system of Claim 8,

wherein said distribution server device generates a permission information identifier which identifies the permission information, stores the generated permission information identifier, and also sends the generated permission information identifier, and

said acquisition device acquires the permission information identifier, and stores the permission information identifier in said removable memory unit.

10. **(Previously Presented)** The distribution system of Claim 9,

wherein said acquisition device reads the permission information identifier from said removable memory unit, and sends the permission information identifier to said distribution server device, and

said distribution server device (a) receives the permission information identifier, (b) judges whether the received permission information identifier matches the permission information identifier stored in said distribution server device, and (c) sends the maintenance information if the two permission information identifiers are judged as matching.

11. **(Canceled)**

12. **(Previously Presented)**   A distribution system that distributes a program for decoding encoded audio data, comprising:

a distribution server device which sends the program;

a removable memory unit which has an area for storing one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type;

an acquisition device which, being connected to said distribution server device via a

4

network and loaded with said removable memory unit, acquires the program from said distribution server device and stores the program in said removable memory unit; and

an audio reproduction device which, being loaded with said removable memory unit storing the program, decodes the encoded audio data using the program, and outputs sounds, said audio reproduction device storing a detection module beforehand, said detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and said audio reproduction device detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from said removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program,

wherein said distribution server device sends an alternative detection module that is a program module used, instead of the detection module stored in said audio reproduction device, for detecting the type of the encoded audio data,

said acquisition device acquires the alternative detection module from said distribution server device, and stores the alternative detection module in said removable memory unit, and

said audio reproduction device reads the alternative detection module from said removable memory unit, and detects the type of the encoded audio data using the alternative detection module instead of the detection module.

13-20. **(Canceled)**

21. **(Previously Presented)**   An audio reproduction device for decoding encoded audio data and outputting sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction device comprising:

a reading unit operable to read the program from the removable memory unit;

a decoding unit operable to decode the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data; and

5

a sound outputting unit operable to convert the audio data to the sounds and output the sounds,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the program is made up of subprograms, and

the audio reproduction device further includes

a subprogram storage area which is used for storing subprograms and

a loading unit operable to write the subprograms in sequence in the subprogram storage area, and

the decoding unit decodes the encoded audio data using the subprograms written in the subprogram storage area.

22. **(Previously Presented)** An audio reproduction device for decoding encoded audio data and outputting sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction device comprising:

a reading unit operable to read the program from the removable memory unit;

a decoding unit operable to decode the encoded audio data using the program, to

6

generate audio data; and

a sound outputting unit operable to convert the audio data to the sounds and output the sounds,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the program is made up of subprograms,

the audio reproduction device further includes

two subprogram storage areas which are each used for storing subprograms and

a loading unit operable to write the subprograms in sequence in the two subprogram storage areas alternately, and

the decoding unit decodes the encoded audio data, alternately using the subprograms written in the two subprogram storage areas.

23. **(Previously Presented)**   An audio reproduction device for decoding encoded audio data and outputting sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction device comprising:

a reading unit operable to read the program from the removable memory unit;

7

a decoding unit operable to decode the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data; and

a sound outputting unit operable to convert the audio data to the sounds and output the sounds,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the removable memory unit stores a unique program beforehand, instead of the program,

the audio reproduction device further includes

a ROM storing unit which is made of a read-only semiconductor memory and stores a common subprogram beforehand, the program being made up of the unique subprogram and the common subprogram,

a RAM storing unit which is made of a readable and rewritable semiconductor memory, and has an area for storing the unique subprogram, and

a loading unit operable to read the unique subprogram from the removable memory unit, and write the unique subprogram in the RAM storing unit, and

the decoding unit decodes the encoded audio data, using the common subprogram and the unique subprogram which are respectively stored in the ROM storing unit and the RAM storing unit.

24. **(Previously Presented)**   An audio reproduction device for decoding encoded audio data

and outputting sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction device comprising:

a reading unit operable to read the program from the removable memory unit;

a decoding unit operable to decode the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data; and

a sound outputting unit operable to convert the audio data to the sounds and output the sounds,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, and

wherein the removable memory unit stores an alternative detection module which is a program module used, instead of the detection module stored in the audio reproduction device, for detecting the type of the encoded audio data, the alternative detection module being sent from the distribution server device to the acquisition device and written in the removable memory unit by the acquisition device,

the audio reproduction device further includes a loading unit operable to read the alternative detection module from the removable memory unit, and write the alternative detection module in the storage area, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the alternative detection module instead of the detection module.

9

25-35. **(Canceled)**

36. **(New)**   A computer-readable recording medium recording a distribution program for use in a distribution system that distributes a program for decoding encoded audio data, the distribution program when executed causes the distribution system to perform the steps comprising:

sending the program and permission information which indicates that the program is permitted for use from a distribution server device, in correspondence with the program using a distribution server device;

storing one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type in a removable memory unit which has an area for storing the one or more programs;

acquiring the permission information and the program from the distribution server device using an acquisition device that is connected to the distribution server device via a network and loaded with the removable memory unit, and storing the permission information and the program in the removable memory unit, the permission information being stored in correspondence with the program; and

decoding the encoded audio data using the program using an audio reproduction device which is loaded with the removable memory unit storing the program, and outputting sounds, the audio reproduction device storing a detection module beforehand as a program module for detecting a type of the encoded audio data,

wherein the program also causes the distribution system to generate a user identifier which identifies a user of the audio reproduction device, stores the generated user identifier, sends the generated user identifier, and also distributes maintenance information for updating the program,

the acquisition device acquires the user identifier and stores the user identifier in the removable memory unit, reads the user identifier from the removable memory unit, and sends the user identifier to a distribution server device,

the distribution server device (a) stores the maintenance information beforehand in correspondence with the program, (b) receives the user identifier, (c) judges whether the received

10

user identifier matches the user identifier stored in the distribution server device, and (d) sends the maintenance information if the two user identifiers are judged as matching, and

the acquisition device acquires the maintenance information, and updates the program stored in the removable memory unit using the acquired maintenance information, and

the audio reproduction device detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, and the audio reproduction device decodes the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit.

37. **(New)** A computer-readable recording medium recording a audio reproduction program for use in an audio reproduction device that decodes encoded audio data and outputs sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction program when executed causes the audio reproduction device to perform the steps comprising:

reading the program from the removable memory unit using a reading unit;

decoding the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data using a decoding unit; and

converting the audio data to the sounds and outputting the sounds using a sound outputting unit,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

11

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the program is made up of subprograms, and

the audio reproduction device further performs the steps of:

storing subprograms in a subprogram storage area;

writing the subprograms in sequence in the subprogram storage area using a loading unit, and

decoding the encoded audio data using the subprograms written in the subprogram storage area using the decoding unit.

38. **(New)** A computer-readable recording medium recording a audio reproduction program for use in an audio reproduction device that decodes encoded audio data and outputs sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction program when executed causes the audio reproduction device to perform steps comprising:

reading the program from the removable memory unit using a reading unit;

decoding the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data using a decoding unit; and

converting the audio data to the sounds and outputting the sounds using a sound outputting unit,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

12

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the program is made up of subprograms, and the audio reproduction device further performs the steps of:

storing subprograms in two subprogram storage areas;

writing the subprograms in sequence in the two subprogram storage areas alternately using a loading unit; and

decoding the encoded audio data, alternately using the subprograms written in the two subprogram storage areas using the decoding unit.

39. **(New)** A computer-readable recording medium recording a audio reproduction program for use in an audio reproduction device that decodes encoded audio data and outputs sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction program when executed causes the audio reproduction device to perform steps comprising:

reading the program from the removable memory unit using a reading unit;

decoding the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data, using a decoding unit; and

converting the audio data to the sounds and outputting the sounds using a sound outputting unit,

13

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, and permission information indicating that the program is permitted for use that is stored in correspondence with the program,

the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, the decoding unit decoding the encoded audio data using the program, only when the permission information corresponding to the program is stored in the removable memory unit, and

wherein the removable memory unit stores a unique program beforehand, instead of the program, and the audio reproduction device further performs the steps of:

storing a common subprogram beforehand, the program being made up of the unique subprogram and the common subprogram using a ROM storing unit which is made of a read-only semiconductor memory;

storing the unique subprogram in a RAM storing unit which is made of a readable and rewritable semiconductor memory, and has an area for storing the unique subprogram;

reading the unique subprogram from the removable memory unit, and writing the unique subprogram in the RAM storing unit using a loading unit; and

decoding the encoded audio data, using the common subprogram and the unique subprogram which are respectively stored in the ROM storing unit and the RAM storing unit, using the decoding unit.

40. **(New)** A computer-readable recording medium recording a audio reproduction program for use in an audio reproduction device that decodes encoded audio data and sounds in a distribution system that includes a distribution server device, an acquisition device, and the audio reproduction device, wherein the distribution server device sends a program for decoding the encoded audio data to the acquisition device via a network, a removable memory unit is loaded to the acquisition device, the acquisition device writes the program in the removable memory

14

unit, and the removable memory unit storing the program is loaded to the audio reproduction device, the audio reproduction program when executed causes the audio reproduction device to perform steps comprising:

reading the program from the removable memory unit;

decoding the encoded audio data using the program, to generate audio data using a decoding unit; and

converting the audio data to the sounds and outputting the sounds using a sound outputting unit,

wherein the removable memory unit stores one or more programs which are each used for decoding encoded audio data of a different type, the audio reproduction device includes a storage area which stores a detection module beforehand, the detection module being a program module used for detecting a type of the encoded audio data, and

the decoding unit detects the type of the encoded audio data using the detection module, reads the program for decoding encoded audio data of the detected type from the removable memory unit, and decodes the encoded audio data using the read program, and

wherein the removable memory unit stores an alternative detection module which is a program module used, instead of the detection module stored in the audio reproduction device, for detecting the type of the encoded audio data, the alternative detection module being sent from the distribution server device to the acquisition device and written in the removable memory unit by the acquisition device, and

the audio reproduction device further performs the steps of:

reading the alternative detection module from the removable memory unit, and writing the alternative detection module in the storage area using a loading unit; and

detecting the type of the encoded audio data using the alternative detection module instead of the detection module using the decoding unit.

15